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ABSTRACT

Small all-female, all-male, and mixed-gender discussion groups were selected from among freshman composition students to discuss papers which the students had written. The use of particle markers (i.e., "well," "ok," "um," etc.) was also examined. Findings suggest that women's speech seems to be better adapted to task-oriented academic discourse than normal male conversational models. Academic discussions of the type studied require the sense of cooperation and attention to individual speakers and group tasks that the female patterns provide. However, an androgynous model, which is cooperative and supportive but also directive and assertive when necessary, also adapts well to peer group interaction. It appears that the classroom, and the instructor, specifically, can reinforce a lifetime of enculturation into gender-specific behavior. (Four figures illustrating types of discussions are included; 16 references are attached.) (SG)

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THE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF COLLABORATIVE GROUPS: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF GENDER IN CONVERSATION

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As a first-time composition instructor, I was eager to use student-workshop groups because all of the composition research I had studied in my teacher-training course pointed to peer editing as a promising learning tool. I liked the idea of my students learning from each other -- from their equals -- and was certain that they would all be able to offer valuable, instructive feedback about each other's work. I also assumed that they would understand how to work collaboratively and would all benefit from it as much as the research had suggested.

However, in private conferences and periodic class evaluations, many of my students complained that their groups were unhelpful and that they were not getting the kind of feedback they needed. They began to ask me exactly what they were supposed to be doing in the workshops -- they wanted specific models that would help to make their meetings more effective. I offered them the general guidelines I had learned from my teaching seminar, but I began to wonder myself what accounted for a group's performance and why some individuals floundered in successful groups. Nothing I studied in composition theory gave any specific, practical answers, so I too began to question what my students were supposed to be doing -- or more precisely, what was actually

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taking place -- in their workshops.

Discourse analysis provided me with the tool I needed to examine exactly what was happening -- or not happening -- in my students' peer groups. By analyzing certain discourse features, such as interruptions and turn-taking strategies, I was able to determine who was adept at connecting and building on ideas, what interruptions signified, and who established and maintained the conversational guidelines. I began to understand in concrete terms what was taking place in the peer groups, and rather than having to rely on vague impressions of what did and did not work, I was able to trace successful and unsuccessful interactions and point to specific patterns that contributed to each.

Moreover, from studying socio-linguistic theory, I learned that everyday, multi-party conversation reflects and reinforces social roles. I was particularly interested in the research suggesting that men and women -- depending on the gender or gender mix of their discourse group -- assume different social roles when they converse. So I framed my study of same-sex and mixed-sex student-workshop groups around determining how gender roles affect interaction. Surprisingly, when I looked for other studies that would relate to my research, I found that, although some gender-related analysis of junior-high classroom groups has been published (Webb and Kenderski, for example), little has been published on the gender analysis of college-level groups. Despite the volumes of studies on peer groups, researchers

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have largely overlooked the social dimensions of what is both an academic and social interaction. And with the growing interest in collaborative learning strategies, it is important to understand what underlies the successes and failures of group work, especially if social factors, such as gender roles play a part.

I based much of my analysis on the gender-oriented research of informal conversations overviewed by John Gumperz in Language and Social Identity and Jennifer Coates in Women, Men and language. These studies consistently describe women's conversational roles as cooperative and supportive, whereas male patterns tend to be interruptive and competitive. In her 1980 study of gossip and all-female language groups, Deborah Jones observes that "where men disagree with or ignore each others' utterances, women tend to acknowledge and build on them....it seems that men pursue a style of interaction based on power, while women pursue a style based on solidarity and support" (Coates 115). Susan Kalcik, who also studied all-female interactions, observes supportive, reciprocal patterns, which Aries corroborates in a 1976 analysis of six mixed-and single-gender groups (two of each grouping). Aries found that in the "all-male groups...a hierarchy emerged with some members holding dominant positions and others more submissive positions ....The two women's groups...were more flexible [and] active speakers [tried] to draw out reticent speakers"--instead of silencing or dominating them in discussions

(116). These gendered-language differences usually mean, among other things, that male speakers end up dominating mixed-gender discussions, and that women tend to play supportive, secretarial roles. Or, as Norman Fairclough explains in Language and Power, institutional and societal conventions tend to cast women "as supporting players in interactions, while men get the star parts" (165).

Methodology

Before I discuss any of my findings, I think it will be helpful to briefly outline the sociolinguistic basis of my analysis. To begin with, I recorded all-male, all-female, and mixed-gender workshop groups from my first-year composition class. Then, I examined the use of particle markers, which are utterances or phrases, such as well, ok, I mean, you know, like, and um. These markers aren't always used in their literal sense and often stand alone as complete utterances, which makes them hard to define in neat syntactic or semantic terms.

And, But, Or--are discourse connectives that unite larger segments of conversation.

And--is a continuative marker.

But--is a contrastive marker and can be used to introduce tangential points.

Or--is an alternative connective marker.

So and Because--mark a cause and result relationship, especially in the informal logic of casual conversation.

because can also introduce or be used as justifier.
so can also introduce a summary or evaluation or concluding remarks or a topic shift.

Y' Know--is a marker of information and participation. If you is the conversational partner, it marks shared information between the speaker and hearer and can be used establish solidarity between them. In its generic second-person-plural sense, you know indicates culturally shared information or assumptions.

I Mean--usually indicates a modification of an earlier statement or signals the expansion of an idea or an explanation of intention.

Like--is also an expansion marker similar to I mean and signals further discussion or development of an idea.

Uh huh, um-hm, ok, right, yeah--are affirmative markers or minimal responses which indicate that the listener understands, agrees and/or is paying attention.

ok--if not followed by further response, can also be used to conclude or close a topic, or, especially in conjunction with so, it can introduce a summary or topic shift.

Well--(1) can mark a response to a direct or implied question, sometimes from earlier in the discourse.
(2) it can also serve as a place holder, which allows a speaker to regroup and form a response to a question or information.
(3) it can also signal a disagreement.

Um--is a place holder that speakers often use, whether necessary or not, to protect a speaking turn. It's similar to well in that it allows the speaker to regroup and formulate a response.

Repetitions and lengthened vowels, such as u:::m or we:::ll can also be used as place holders.

Anyway, Anyhow--signals a return to a previous point or a redirection from a digression. ("Anyway, what were we talking about?")

I also analyzed the rate of simultaneous speech based on Stephen Murray's distinction between overlaps and

interruptions. In the case of an overlap, a speaker begins during what can be interpreted as a completion point for the previous speaker. In an interruption, a speaker begins at a point that can in no way be interpreted as a possible completion point.

Murray also devised an interruption continuum, which defines cutting off a speaker before s/he makes a first point as the most intrusive interruption. I would also place interrupting to change the subject in this category. The less severe interruptions include cutting a speaker off in mid-clause after s/he has made at least one point or beginning to speak in the environs of a pause or in what seems to be the end of a clause and immediately returning the speaking floor to the original speaker. Note that on the actual transcripts of the discussions, the following notations appear:

( ) parentheses indicate commentary by the researcher.

/ / text within the slashes indicates that the researcher is not certain that it is an accurate transcription of the words spoken. A question mark within the slashes indicates that the discourse was inaudible.

[A bracket indicates interruptive, overlapping speech.

Z Indicates a cooperative overlap, or no

discernible pause between speakers.

.. A double period indicates a half-second pause, and each additional period indicates an additional half-second pause.

: A semi-colon indicates a lengthened vowel sound, for example, "so:::"

Another discourse feature I examined was the use of questions and specifically tag questions, such as ok?, right?, should/could we?, isn't it?, and in some cases you know? In Women, Men and Language, Jennifer Coates defines affective tags, which are more common in women's speech, as questions that "express the speaker's attitude to the addressee" (104). Such expressions are addressee oriented and function as facilitative tags or softening tags. Facilitative tags convey the speakers support of, or interest in the addressee, and they draw him/her into the conversation. For example, "That's a fascinating story, isn't it?" -- this gives the addressee a chance to enter the conversation. Softening tags mitigate the force of negative assertions, such as criticisms -- "That doesn't sound right, does it?" Affective tags may also function as hedges, which can reflect uncertainty or can soften an assertive speech act, for example, "Let's go on to the next question, ok?" Fairclough explains that authority figures, teachers for example, also use this device with their subordinates to lessen the appearance of a power differential. Modal tags

are more typical of male speech. They are speaker oriented in that they request information that the speaker wants or needs, for example, "She just had a baby, right?" (see Figure 2). They can also ask the addressee to endorse the speaker's assertion, for example, "you should stop procrastinating, shouldn't you?" (104).

Although my observations were mostly consistent with the results of previous gender studies, I did notice some departures from typical conversational rules, which seemed to be affected by the academic nature of the discussions I analyzed. Previous research focuses mostly on informal conversations, whereas my work deals with the task-oriented discussions of student-peer groups, and that particular setting had some impact on conversational roles. For example, in the mixed-gender group, which I'll be discussing first, two of the women appear to direct the discussion. However, that has as much to do with their secretarial roles (a typically female one) as it does with any assertive leadership roles.

The Mixed-Gender Group

The mixed-gender group included two men -- Steve and Tom -- and three women -- Debbie, Sue, and Tamara. Debbie is a somewhat problematic subject because she missed their first meeting and said little in the second one. All five of them are white, middle/upper class 18 or 19 year-olds. In the first recorded, session, they are discussing a set of

assigned questions on "A Rose for Emily." The passage below represents a fairly typical exchange.

MIXED-GENDER DISCUSSION 1: CARETAKING AND DIGRESSIONS

FIGURE 1

1	Sue:	Ok, should we go on?
2	Tamara:	Yeah
3	Sue:	Why does she she kill Homer and not only keep his body but sleep with it?
4	Steve:	[Woo:::
5	Sue:	/?/
6	Tamara:	Disgusting /?/ (they all laugh) She was /?/ (3 sec)]
7	Sue:	What's your input, Tom?
8	Tom:	She likes 'em frigid
9	Sue:	(laughs)
10	Steve:	[Oh::: mea:::n
11	Sue:	Oh:::
12	Tamara:	I can't believe he said that on tape]
13	All:	(laugh) /?/
14	Tamara:	So why does she kill Homer and keep his body?
15	Sue:	I think that's her only way of keeping him there cause otherwise..
16	Tamara:	He probably wanted to leave 'er
17	Sue:	Yeah otherwise /?/
18	Steve:	/?/

19 Tamara: He's a user and abuser and he's on his way out.. and she's like (3 sec)

20 Sue: /?/ (laughs)

21 Tamara: Yeah you think so buddy

22 Sue: (laughs)

23 Steve: Rigor mortis sets in

24 Tom: She probably slept with him and his leg was sticking straight up

25 All: (laugh)

26 Tamara: Oh Go::d (3 sec; then she reads the next question) Explain the title. Why a "Rose for Emily"?

This group followed a consistent pattern. Sue and Tamara were the conversational caretakers, which according to Maltz and Borker's 1980 study of mixed-gender interactions, is a common role for female speakers (Gumperz). For Sue and Tamara, that role entailed initiating discussions, keeping the group on-task, maintaining the conversational flow, and preventing lengthy digressions. The men rarely initiated what Sarah Warshauer-Freedman and Melanie Sperling define in "Written Language Acquisition" as discourse topics -- i.e., topics about writing or literature (as cited in The Acquisition of Written Language: Response and Revision). However, the men frequently sidetracked the discussion with jokes or off-topic comments, especially in response to the women's questions. The women sometimes responded with laughter or

surprise, but they rarely accepted or pursued the off-topic comments. Instead, they quickly moved the conversation back on track.

For example, Sue begins the exchange in Figure 1 with a managerial comment, "Ok, should we go on?," which seems acceptable to everyone, so she reads the next question. The other group members are too embarrassed to respond, so she asks Tom, who has said little up to this point, for his "input." He responds with a joke at Turn 8, and they all carry on with the joke until Tamara redirects them back to the original question at Turn 14. She and Sue discuss the question until Steve and Tom break in again with more jokes at Turns 23 and 24. Tamara waits until the laughter subsides and then reads the next question at Turn 27. Notice here that Steve and Tom's digression effectively concludes the foregoing discussion and that Tamara doesn't even attempt to to link the previous question with the following one, much less ask if the previous one was resolved.

Maltz and Borker note similar kinds of digressions in their analysis of male discourse and describe them as typical of male (especially young male) interactions. Young boys and men sometimes engage in a competitive verbal game in which they earn points with side comments or jokes (Gumperz). One immediately noticeable effect, whether it's consciously intended or not, is that the "digressors" temporarily assert control over the content and direction of the discussion. These are relatively harmless distractions, but one of the

"caretakers" or secretaries must overtly redirect the discussion.

The group members tended to follow Sue and Tamara's leads or redirections because they knew how to appropriate and use my authority, but in an indirect way. For example, they used my assigned questions to begin the discussion or re-route it after a digression. Similarly, they tended to frame their directives as modal questions using the inclusive we, which softens a directive and suggests a collective decision instead of a command--for example, "Ok, should we go on?" This may seem to be a surreptitious, manipulative strategy, and to a degree it is, but it's understandable given that traditional language and social conventions require women to disguise assertive speech acts to avoid appearing too authoritative or controlling. Consider too, in Figure 1, Sue and Tamara's "teacherly" use of ok and so to open and close topics, to sum up, and to move the discussion on, which is another index of their implicit authority in the group. Moreover, these are strategies that I modelled and reinforced in my own classroom discourse --and with only a vague notion of how I used them and of the power they masked.

Sue and Tamara also tended to use questions for conversational maintenance or, as Maltz and Borker suggest, to invite participation. For example, when Sue asks Tom for his "input" concerning the embarrassing question about Homer and Emily, she is both trying to maintain a faltering discussion and to draw Tom into the conversation. Men, on

the other hand, usually want specific information in response to a question. Coates describes this invitational questioning as a way of nudging a reticent speaker into a more active role, and this is typical of women's speech and teacher talk in general. Sue and Tamara were proficient in what Diane Rawlings defines as "facilitative teacher talk" ("Discourse Analysis of Writing Groups: The Implications of 'Teacher Talk.'") That is, they knew how to focus attention on their ideas, sustain a serious conversation, and keep the rest of the group on task. Because their caretaker role complements the academic-discourse model of the workshop group, Sue and Tamara could take full advantage of a peer-learning experience. By directing much of the discussion, they not only ensured the completion of group tasks, but they also received a great deal of feedback on their ideas.

Neither Steve nor Tom assumed the dominant roles that most sociolinguistic theories predict for men in mixed groups, and I think this had to do with the academic nature of the discourse. The two men were not as skilled in that discourse as Sue and Tamara. Steve was the proverbial "yes man," and he used affirming minimal responses, such as <u>yeah</u> and <u>uh huh</u>, at a higher rate than anyone else. He rarely expressed disagreement, much less introduce a new topic or elaborate on his ideas. Unfortunately, this meant that he elicited very little discussion of his ideas and got little concrete advice on exactly how to use his group's suggested revision strategies.

Tom sometimes had to struggle to get into the conversation -- partly because he tended to introduce side points or tangential ideas. He also tended to interrupt at inappropriate times, for example, before a speaker makes his/her first point, and often to change the subject -- both of which signal the most intrusive kinds of interruptions. And he was more inclined to try to change the subject before the previous topic had been exhausted or resolved, so his interruptions or attempts to enter the discussion were more likely to be seen as intrusive or distracting and less likely to gain him access to the floor. Consider the following exchange concerning Tom and Debbie's papers on "The Yellow Wallpaper":

MIXED-GENDER DISCUSSION 2: INTERRUPTIONS

Figure 2

50 Steve: The bars on the windows compare to the bars on the wallpaper.

51 Tom: This is gonna [sound weird but

52 Tamara: [Bars in a jail

53 Tom: [But like they uh

54 Tamara: [Ya know like bars in a jail where you're trapped and you can't get out?..She's stuck there like she did something wrong

55 Tom: She just had a baby right?

56 Tamara: and she can't get away from it. [her "jail,"

not her baby]

57 Tom: [Huh?

58 Tamara: [But she didn't do anything wrong.

At Turn 51, Tom uses the marker <u>but</u> to break away from the on-going discourse with a tangential idea. Tamara interrupts him at Turn 52 before he can make a point, but she is pursuing the topic that is already on the floor, while Tom is trying to change the subject entirely. Tamara and Tom then compete for the speaking floor from Turns 51-58, at which point Tamara comes to some conclusion and yields the floor. They spoke at cross-purposes because Tom failed to accept and endorse the current topic before introducing a topic shift. Tamara, who had already established herself as a discussion "manager," actively resisted what she probably saw as another conversational distraction. Tamara was not so completely controlling that no one else could speak, but rather, that Tom didn't know how to assert his speaking rights without violating someone else's speaking rights or the group's implicit turn-taking rules, so he had a hard time claiming the floor.

Because they are discussing Debbie's and Tom's papers, the speaking floor should go mostly to the, but Debbie gets (or takes) only two speaking turns. At Turn 9, she has a short turn ending in a questioning intonation, which suggests an implicit request for support or confirmation of her ideas:

> I don't know what I'm gonna write mine on. I . . . I think I 'm gonna do it on um "Yellow Wall-Paper." Just how her husband treated 'er just like when he wouldn't let 'er write in the book, wouldn't let 'er write anything?

She then pauses for about four seconds -- again, as if to wait for some acknowledgement or support or even permission to continue.

Debbie doesn't speak again until Turn 48 after Tamara raises an issue relating to Debbie's questions at Turn 9. During this last passage, her language is tentative and hedging -- the kind of unassertive language that Lakoff believes women are taught to speak. For example Debbie uses repetition, lengthened vowel sounds ("bu:::t") and the expansion marker "I mean" to hold her place -- as if she expected to be interrupted or to lose her turn, even though the floor is hers.

Debbie's ineptitude with academic discourse or facilitative teacher-talk probably accounts for the sense of powerlessness that her language reflects. Because she is less adept than Sue and Tamara at manipulating academic discourse, she had to wait for a chance to re-enter the discussion -- unlike Tom, who, as a male speaker, seemed to feel entitled to interrupt the conversation at virtually any point. Even when Debbie did re-enter the discussion, she

could not sustain the attention to her ideas, so her peer group had little impact on her essays. Her last turn was brief and did not generate much useful discussion. In fact, in the entire discussion, she barely affected the four-way exchange between the other members.

I suspect too that this was another behavior I unconsciously modelled in classroom interactions. I responded the same way to other students unskilled at academic discourse and gave more time and attention to students who had mastered teacher-talk, instead of giving enough time to students who needed my input and attention much more.

Tamara, had more speaking turns than anyone else, especially in exchanges with Sue, and both of them used expansion or shared-knowledge markers at about the same rate that they used affirming-discourse markers. Moreover, unlike Tom, Tamara tended not to use her interruptions to introduce unrelated issues or to completely change the subject. However, she did occasionally indulge in a kind of "intellectual lockeroom" humor. For example, she brought up a few terms that she learned in other classes--"sexual repression" and "incest taboo," to name a few--which became running jokes in the conversation. Nonetheless, she still managed to return to the subject at hand without prompting from any one else. She could shift easily between two different roles, which allowed her to enjoy the group's spontaneity while still directing the discussion.

Coates relates this kind flexibility to "psychological androgyny," which, she argues, is a valuable model in contemporary society because it affords both men and women a "wide repertoire of behavior to cope with a wide[r] variety of social roles" (76). Its counterpart, linguistic androgyny, would arguably increase what Dell Hymes calls "communicative competence," which depends on the cultural and social factors deemed appropriate for a given speaker in a given social context (96).

Like other forms of behavior, social expectations about gender often determine what is considered socially (in)appropriate for a given speaker. Given that gender-specific behavioral distinctions are beginning to blur, it seems logical that speakers who can assimilate the associated linguistic changes will be more flexible and adaptable. Tamara's linguistic androgyny gave her a more prominent position in the group because it virtually doubled her communicative competence, so, unlike many women in mixed-gender discussions, she was more than just the group secretary. Debbie, on the other hand, whose speech reflected a more strictly feminine role -- as defined by traditional standards -- played only a minor role in the workshop group.

Of the written work from this peer group, Tamara and Sue's essays were clearly the strongest. They were able to translate their conversational management skills and their understanding of academic discourse into their written work. For that reason, their essays tended to be rather

conventional. They were essentially elaborations on the five-paragraph theme written in a clearly academic voice, but for standard essays, they were also well developed and carefully thought out.

Steve's work was similar in form to theirs, but it often needed more development -- much like his brief comments in the peer group. He readily agreed with criticism and advice on his essays, but he rarely revised or expanded his work beyond the original drafts. He seemed to not understand how to develop his ideas -- in conversation or written work -- beyond some initial insight. I suspect, too, that he didn't know <u>how</u> to use his peer group's advice in his papers or how to to discuss strategies for using that advice -- he could only agree with it.

Interestingly, Debbie's essays tended to be more original -- probably because she had little outside feedback -- but her essays were also uneven, inconsistent and sometimes illogical. Tom's work showed similar weaknesses and probably for the same reason. Neither Tom nor Debbie knew how to take advantage of their peer group sessions because they had not mastered the academic discourse used in the workshops. And, since their papers were often unconventional, their classmates may not have known how to address the problems in Debbie's and Tom's writing. Laurel Black's and Diane Rawlings' findings also suggest that the weakest students often flounder because the help they do receive is in a language they don't understand, or they don't

know how to ask for information that will be the most helpful to them (Black, "'I Don't Know How To Say Things.' Language, Gender and Power, in Student-Teacher Conferences" and Rawlings, "Discourse Analysis of Writing Groups.")

Despite the uneveness of this group, I did notice a distinct energy or heightened attention that I did not see in the other groups. The discussions in the mixed group were more competitive and less cooperative, but they were also usually more open and dynamic. They felt free to openly express disagreements, which may have given them a wider exposure to different kinds of audiences and reactions to their writing. Nonetheless, they accomplished less during their meetings, and clearly the group work didn't serve everyone equally.

THE ALL-FEMALE GROUP

The all-female group -- Karen, Monica, and Missy -- and the mixed-gender group shared some similar features, but for the most part, they were noticeably different. Among other things, the women held a much longer discussion, which supports Lynette Hirshman's findings that "elaboration is a key dynamic to women's talk" (as cited Malz and Borker 209). The all-female group's tendency towards elaboration accounts for their extensive use of expanding and connecting discourse markers. Moreover, this group talked almost non-stop for close to two hours without any significant digressions--no

one in the all-female group had to redirect the conversation as emphatically or as often as Tamara did in the mixed-gender group.

In Stone's comparison between men's and women's speech, based on his personal experiences as a home-based husband and father, he observed in women, their mutual cooperation and "willingness to accept confusion and speculation as an end." In men's speech, on the other hand, he observed a "gladitorial, contest of language....[and reliance] on the dogma of formulae" (Coates 116). His description of female speech may seem, at best, like a back-handed compliment, but I found in my all-female group, the same willingness to engage in speculation and to accept uncertainty (as opposed to confusion). They seemed comfortable discussing possibilities or exploring new interpretations of the literature they read, instead of insisting on a concrete answers, or the "dogma of formulae."

The women's response patterns were, as most of the research would predict, cooperative, supportive, on-task and marked by facilitative questions, analyses, summaries, and very little superficial evaluation. Also, their interruptions were less intrusive or distracting, and more likely to be associated with conversational maintenance -- for example, as a way of showing support or helping to work through ideas. Malz and Borker describe these patterns as "extended signs of interest and attention, such as interjecting comments or questions during a speaker's

discourse. These often take the form of interruptions [which are] extremely common despite women's concern with politeness and decorum" (Gumperz 210). So it's important to distinguish these facilitative, supportive interruptions that build on the discourse rather than disrupt it, as was often the case in the mixed-gender group.

Unlike the mixed-gender group, the all-female group members tended to offer opposing views as alternate interpretations rather than direct challenges to a speaker's opinions. Accordingly, they used phrases like "I got the impression, and "It seemed to me" or "The meaning I got out of it," and they never interrupted when offering an opposing view point. In the mixed-gender group, differing opinions often precipitated a lot of simultaneous talk and interruptions. Possibly, the mixed group didn't feel the "politeness burden" as strongly as did the all-female group. However, while the concern with politeness probably facilitated a smoother conversation, it may also have inhibited the women from openly expressing conflicting views. This is typical of female speakers, and I know I often prefaced my disagreements with expressions like "It seemed to me," or "I got the impression," which couches conflicting views in polite, non-threatening terms. This approach is probably the most effective in a relatively non-competitive environment. It is equally possible that I used such expressions because, as a teacher, I had no competition.

But even in the non-competitive, supportive atmosphere

of the women's group, Missy seemed especially hesitant about offering her own interpretations -- for example, at one point, she says "I'm not agreein with anyone on this. Maybe I'm just stupid." However, she did go on to develop her ideas even though she continued to preface many of her comments with self-derogatory remarks. She also ended with questions like, "Does anyone agree with me?" which is really an implicit request for reassurance and validation of her ideas. In fact, Missy went so far as to write notes to me on her essays apologizing for what she assumed I would see as poor work. Her responses call to mind Lakoff's belief that women are taught to sound unassertive, so that their speech reinforces stereotypical expectations about their behavior.

Of course, her one example doesn't necessarily support that assertion because not all of the other women in this study responded that way, but then neither did any of the men. Even Steve (mixed group), who said that all of his papers were "stupid," didn't see that as a reflection on his intelligence or competence. Missy's "Maybe I'm just stupid" parallels the kind of self-generalizing that Laurel Black observes in her female students' disproportionate use of "I don't know" ("I Don't Know How to Say Things). Both mark an uncertainty about the knowledge and tasks demanded of them in an academic environment. When the women failed to meet those demands or if they simply had different criteria, they perceived some deficiency or stupidity on their part, not something arbitrary and separate from themselves, as the men

did. Steve made that distinction clear -- it was his paper that was "stupid," not him, and he never apologized for his work.

Missy's responses recall some of the response patterns of Debbie from the mixed group. Like Debbie, Missy seemed to perceive herself as ineffectual, powerless and less qualified than the other group members. Missy's language sounded powerless like Debbie's -- marked by uncertainty, hedges, questioning intonations, and repetition. Both of their language patterns share the same powerless features described by O'Barr's analysis of courtroom discourse. He found that what Lakoff attributed to women's speech, could also be attributed to members of powerless communities (in which women represent a disproportionate percentage). O'Barr found that markers of powerlessness appearing in courtroom interactions correlate with the speaker's social status -- an index of his/her relative power in society -- and the speaker's previous courtroom experience -- an index of his/her expertise with courtroom discourse (Coates 114).

I would argue that the same kinds of features play a part in academic discourse. A classroom or a workshop, like a courtroom has well-established language and behavioral conventions. The participants who've mastered those conventions will be able use them to their best advantage. Those less skilled will have less success because of their inability to manipulate the appropriate conventions, and this in turn will convey or reinforce a powerless image. But as

Black suggests, the more disturbing implication is that, on an institutional level, they may be denied access to the language of power, or get the tacit message that they are simply not in a position to use that language. So they use the language of powerlessness, self-derogation and ineffectuality instead.

Monica appeared much more accustomed to academic discussions than Missy. She showed her sense of empowerment or entitlement by the sheer volume of her speech and confidence in her ideas or questions. She used expansion and shared-information markers (Like, y' know, I mean) at a much higher rate than anyone else from any of the groups. Y' know seemed to function, in part, as a way of establishing solidarity, which is typical of women's speech. However, not only did it take Monica more time and space to express herself, but if there was a long pause, she tended to fill in the gaps by elaborating further. This was a conversational maintenance strategy for her. That is, if no one responded to her or any idea on the floor, she continued to work though the ideas to sustain the conversation, rather than to exclude other speakers by out-talking them.

Judging from Karen's responses, she spent a lot of time listening to and processing Missy's and Monica's conversation. Because she had a more developed academic vocabulary, she could synthesize and articulate what they were trying to say. For example, in Figure 3, she helps Missy work through a problem in her paper on "Richard Cory"

and "For the Anniversary of My Death":

ALL-FEMALE DISCUSSION: SYNTHESIS AND ARTICULATION

Figure 3

104 Karen: Maybe that's where your problem is.. you have to condense it...not condense it but just like be a little more specific because I mean you can't /?/ all the problems of the world it'd take you forever

105 Missy: Well I didn't...

106 Karen: So ya know just like maybe state a thesis that there's...one of the problems of the world...

which

107 Missy: But but but (laughs, 5 sec pause)

108 Monica: Yeah but you need a...you need a..like something in here that's gonna tell you...like

109 Missy: That's one of the problems that /?/ now

110 Monica: Yeah

111 Missy: So should I move this up here?

112 Karen: I'm just sayin somth, no no I'm just sayin that you need a sentence or somethin here as

as your thesis that's gonna lead you into

this argument

113 Missy: Oh..should I move that up there you think? (3 sec)

114 Monica: Or not necessarily move it but just kinda like..

115 Karen: Restate it.

116 Monica: Yeah..we restate things a lot you know we restate a lot of stuff in our paper. It gets

said over and over again (laughs)

117 Karen: So one of the problems of the world..is that people..are..so caught..up in themselves...that they don't...care about other people.

Monica, on the other hand, spent more time thinking aloud and used phrases like "and stuff" and "or whatever" to help articulate ideas that she was still working through, but neither she, nor Missy showed Karen's capacity for synthesizing each other's ideas or focusing on problem areas in papers.

Karen was also able to relate ideas separated by long intervals of conversation and then build on those ideas. For example, after a long, rambling discussion about a particular line in one poem, she asks, "So how does that relate to this [other] poem?" Notice how, in this example and the ones in Figure 3, Karen uses so in a teacherly way to summarize or reinforce what she sees as crucial points or to draw ideas

together, much like Sue and Tamara did in the mixed group. This aptitude for linking related or parallel issues or finding connections between seemingly unrelated ideas is another common feature of women's speech that Deborah Jones and, as well as Candace West and Don Zimmerman, find in their analyses of women's speech.

Karen's role parallels the role played by Sue in the mixed-gender group. Sue was also adept at relating individual elements of the group discourse. She tended to use markers that affirm and connect previous ideas. For example, during one long passage from their second discussion, she said very little until she re-entered the discussion by synthesizing two different lines of discussion about two different fictional characters: "Yeah. I think there's really a contrast too between the two of 'em." And then she went on to develop the idea that she drew from the other speakers. Maltz and Borker find this to be also typical of women's speech and point to Kalcik and Hirshman's findings that: "women tend to link their utterance to the one preceding it by building on the previous utterance or talking about something parallel or related to it, [which suggests] women's desire to create continuity in conversation" (Gumperz, 210).

As you might expect, Karen's papers were very good -- inventive and sophisticated -- and, as she did in the group, she was very good at connecting big ideas and seeing the literature in a larger context. Monica's essays were

conventional, but solid, well-written pieces. And as I've mentioned, Missy's work was at least as good as Monica's, sometimes better, but her discourse certainly didn't reflect the confidence you would expect

When I first listened to the women's discussion, I was a bit troubled because they seemed so tentative. It took them several exchanges just to get started because no one was willing to take charge as Sue and Tamara did in the mixed-gender group. But Coates argues that the features of adult-female discourse -- cooperation and encouragement -- as well as the features sometimes attributed to powerlessness can actually be powerful signs of solidarity and support when used reciprocally.

There was no overt hierarchy in this group. Karen came closest to what might be defined as a group leader, but this had more to do with her skills as a writer-editor and less to do with any control over the content or direction of the discussion. In fact they all seemed to avoid asserting any kind of control, so they had to rely on cooperation -- all three were the conversational caretakers. I think this is what made the women's group successful overall, and it also made the difference for Missy. It's what "saved" her from lapsing into the relative obscurity that Debbie fell into in the mixed group. If nothing else, it made it easier for Missy to play a more active role than Debbie in the peer groups, even though Missy obviously still felt very insecure.

All-Male Group

The all-male group consisted of Mark, Ron, and Steve. (Steve had previously been in the mixed-gender group, and this becomes a factor in his role in the male group.) The male and female groups seemed to have a lot in common, but I immediately noticed how much easier it was to the transcribe men's discussion, which suggested a different pattern to their discourse. Interestingly, as they discuss their essays on The Color Purple, they did not begin, as the women did, with the writers' questions or concerns about their papers. Instead, Steve or Mark usually began with some general observation about the paper they were discussing, such as "I liked the topic," or "The paper flowed well." Then Ron responds to their comments either by answering their questions or elaborating on their ideas and sometimes posing his own questions. It's only after the other speakers comment that the writer asks whatever questions he may have, and after his concerns are addressed, they move on to the next paper.

Also, the men used fewer questions and tended to be more prescriptive than the women, sometimes offering cut-and-paste suggestions. For example, in Figure 4 below, Steve advises Mark to "maybe just like [add] a couple of 'ands' or just connecting some of the sentences or somethin." In the same passage, Steve also explains, that "this is 'toward.' you don't put the 's.'" Then Steve points out another sentence that is unclear to him, and from Turns 80 to 100, all three

of them concentrate on correcting that sentence.

ALL-MALE DISCUSSION: INTERRUPTIONS AND OVERLAPS

Figure 4

77 Steve: Yes....There's one right here though there's this one sentence I'm not sure of 'rather sexual or physical this abuse'...you talkin either or either [I'm not sure /?/

78 Mark: [Yeah that's what I'm /?/ I wasn't sure what word..I kept writing a bunch of words and that's the only one I could..I wanted to say 'rather' if it was /?/ it was sexual or physical abuse...difference

79 Steve: This is 'toward' you don't put the 's'

80 Mark: Um:::

81 Steve: Let me see what [could

82 Ron: [Could be 'either'

83 Mark: [Both'

84 Ron: either 'sexual' or 'physical.'

85 Mark: Both'

86 Steve: What's the /?/ word sexual or physical abuse led [Celie

87 Mark: [Uh huh

88 Steve: and then just try and do it [like that

89 Ron: [Yeah an the
I think might /?/ better

90 Mark: 'Both?'

91 Steve: Yeah

92 Mark: [Write that in there will ya 'both' and 'and'
[and then cut this?

93 Steve: Yeah [4 sec pause]

94 Mark: Cut this out?

95 Steve: Yeah that should work.

96 Ron: But the sexual and but the sexual and physical abuse led to Celie's indifference.

97 Mark: That would work.

98 Steve: Yeah and then it still.../?/

99 Ron: [It says the same
thing it just says it better.

100 Steve: Yeah

101 Mark: What should I have /?/ what else besides the stepfather do you think I could add too..to make it longer or more [substance to it maybe?

102 Ron: [Ok..um with this part you you need to expand you thesis maybe a little bit but um you see you've laid a real good foundation for the for Celie's character.

Unlike the all-female or mixed-gender groups, the men were more likely to have a series of overlaps than interruptions, and these passages were usually associated

with affirming discourse markers (yeah, uh huh), for example, at Turns 90-91 or 99-100. As noted in the discussion of the mixed-gender group, men use these minimal markers to indicate agreement or comprehension, which is primarily how the all-male group used them.

At any rate, the men were much less likely to interrupt each other. The passages of interruptions are short and, like the overlaps, they often involve minimal affirming markers (see Turns 86-87, 88-89, 98-99). Also the men usually don't interrupt until the first speaker has neared the end of a clause, and they are quick to yield the floor to each other during instances of simultaneous talk -- both of which make interruptions less intrusive or disruptive (see Turns 77-78, 81-82, 101-102). This supports West and Zimmerman's findings that men are more likely to interrupt female conversational partners than male partners (Gumperz, 198).

However, when interruptions did occur in the men's group, it was usually for the same reasons that the women engaged in simultaneous talk -- to help each other articulate an idea, and to acknowledge suggestions -- as in the above examples. Similarly, neither the men or women tried to change the subject during simultaneous talk or to directly challenge each other's ideas. Perhaps in mixed-gender groups, there is simply more tension, which sometimes leads to more distractions and competition for attention.

Like the female group, the men never seriously

digressed, even with all the distractions of a busy cafeteria where they met. No one had to repeatedly redirect the conversation as Tamara did in the mixed-gender group. Also like the female group, the male group had more lengthy pauses during and in between speaking turns. For both the male and female groups this seemed to suggest that they didn't anticipate any obstacles to regaining the speaking floor if another speaker chose to take a speaking turn after the pause.

Ron's role was similar to Karen's and Sue's in that he builds on the other speakers' ideas, as well as drawing on his own observations. Accordingly, he used more connecting and expanding markers such as and, but, or, and I mean like than Steve or Mark. Elaboration is associated more with women's speech, which suggests that Ron, like Tamara, has developed some features of linguistic androgyny that in turn increased his communicative competence. Ron didn't take as many speaking turns as Steve, who had the most, but Ron's turns tended to be more substantial and much longer -- his comments went beyond affirming. Like Karen, he used the summative so and ok in a teacherly way, and he had a more sophisticated vocabulary for discussing academic papers on literary topics. For instance, at line 102, he advises Mark about expanding his thesis and laying a foundation for character development.

Mark took about as many turns as Ron, but Mark's turns tended to be much briefer. These shorter turns were usually

affirmations. He used almost as many affirming markers as Steve but far fewer expansion or connective markers than either Steve or Ron. Mark was more likely to suggest an idea or ask a question and then allow Ron to develop or expand the subject. For example, when they discuss Steve's paper, Mark suggests that Steve needs more analysis, and then Ron elaborates on Mark's observation. I suspect that Mark deferred to Ron's stronger verbal skills because he assumed that Ron was better able to articulate and develop his ideas.

Although Steve continued his role as "affirmer" and used many more affirming markers than the other speakers, he also, assumed more of a leadership or task-oriented role in this group. He opens the discussion and moves the group on to the next task -- for example, "Now we go on to Mark's paper" -- and he concludes the discussion at the end, "So..I guess that's it." Note that he uses directives, and unlike the women I've discussed, he doesn't issue them in the form of a question. It's as if, in adopting this normally secretarial role, he had to first transform it into a more authoritative, "masculine," approach. His own experiences in the mixed group probably told him that men are more resistant to the female secretarial model.

One possible explanation for the change in roles is that he felt responsible for the group meeting. They met outside of class, and I gave Steve the tape recorder and put him in charge of arranging for the meeting time. Another possibility is that since the usual conversational

caretakers -- Sue and Tamara -- were not there, he saw the need to assume their roles.

To some degree, though, both the men's and women's responses are patterned after mine. I modelled two different kinds of responses -- one that was more teacher-directed and another that was more student-centered. The men chose the former, which makes sense given that they favor offering and receiving specific, concrete information. Like the men, I often began with ambiguous observations, like "It's an interesting topic," or "It's well-organized" -- the kinds of responses that teachers grope for when they are stumped or are looking for something positive to say as first remark. And as I sometimes did, the men worked from these general impressions down to some specific point or piece of advice. I also tried asking the students what specific things in their papers they wanted to discuss first, like the all-female group did. It's not surprising that the women opted for the student-oriented approach. It reflects their greater attention to politeness (encouraging another speaker go first) and their desire to avoid assuming or establishing a specific group leader or hierarchical pattern. So even though the male and female groups shared some of the same features (being non-competitive and on-task), they each chose the models that were the most compatible with their gendered-speech roles.

It's equally possible, too, that because of deeply ingrained, unconscious patterns, I based my style of response

on the student's gender. Perhaps previous interactions with men implicitly taught me to be more directive with male students, who tend to want (or to exert) more overt direction and who tend to look for cut-and-dry information or advice. Because women tend to be less aggressive conversational partners, I may have unconsciously felt comfortable enough with female students to use a less directive and more student-oriented approach.

At any rate, I found it interesting that in mixed group, the men's behavior was more consistent with young boy's discourse patterns. The all-male group's discourse, however, had more in common with what's expected of adult-female speech. As I suggested earlier, Ron, like Tamara, evidenced some features of linguistic androgyny, namely his use of elaboration -- to build and connect on ideas. This skill combined with his aptitude for academic discourse made him a good candidate for discussion leader. That in itself may account for the similarities between the two same-gender groups. On the other hand, the similarities between the male and female groups are perhaps simply a function of same-gender academic discourse.

CONCLUSIONS: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Overall, my research suggests that women's speech is better adapted to task-oriented-academic discourse, than normal male conversational models. Academic discussions, especially in peer groups, generally require the kind of

cooperation and attention to individual speakers and group tasks that female patterns provide. And the androgynous model -- perhaps just another facet, or definition of academic teacher-talk -- also adapts well to peer-group interaction. Like teacher-talk, it can negotiate two functions -- being cooperative and supportive, but also being directive and assertive when necessary. And, not too surprisingly, the men seemed much more willing to accept from another male the authority embedded in this approach. The men's frequent digressions and abrupt topic shifts in the mixed group suggests their resistance to female authority, even when that authority is disguised.

Of course this single study isn't definitive, but it does support much of what previous studies have found about gendered-language differences. So with this data, I can build on the work of researchers like Borker and Maltz, and Kalcik and Hirshman, and Jones. But it also has a measurable practical value -- I can show my students their socially determined conversational roles and patterns, their relative group strengths and weaknesses and how to improve their group interaction. Equally important is that I've learned to be much more careful in arranging my workshop groups. I no longer assume that I can arbitrarily throw groups together and expect them to magically work, nor can I attribute success and failure to luck.

Moreover, as I examine my students' interactions, I must implicate myself, to some degree, in their behavior.

They based much of their interactional styles on what I had modelled for them. And when I consider the impact of gender on group dynamics and on the roles that my students and I adopted, I can see all the more clearly how pre-existing social relations are maintained in the classroom. Contrary to what I believed as a first-time instructor, neither students, nor teachers magically abandon years of socialization once they enter a classroom. In actuality, the classroom can reinforce a lifetime of enculturation into gender-specific behavior. For that reason, I now believe it is naive to assume that class-rooms exist in a social and political vacuum untouched by outside realities or socially constructed beliefs.

Ultimately then, I have to reconsider my own politically "innocent" academic training, my pedagogical naivete as a first-time instructor, and how those factors affected student-teacher interaction. At first, I barely understood the meaning of pedagogy beyond conventional explanations -- "the art or profession of teaching." I assumed that pedagogy in practice and theory was as neutral as its standard definition. And I certainly did not understand the social implications, the potential raw power, of the "art of teaching," or, for that matter, the ideological assumptions underlying such a seemingly neutral definition

In Life in Schools, Peter McLaren draws on Roger Simon's distinction between teaching and pedagogy, which he defines as:

> [the way] a teacher's work within an institutional context specifies a particular version of what knowledge is of most worth, what it means to know something, and how we might construct representations of ourselves, others and our physical and social environment. (161)

I was not entirely conscious of my own pedagogical practices, or how they determined "what knowledge [was] of most worth" in my classroom, or how I constructed my representational self. I was even less aware of how those practices performed the cultural work of legitimizing particular values and power relations. Intentionally or not, I tried obscure the signs of my authority, but in reality, I was, in Fairclough's terms hiding "power behind [my] discourse" (55). In doing so, I subtly reinforced the ideological structures of my academic community, the very ones I thought I was subverting. I'm only now beginning to recognize how my behavior and my students' socialized-language roles intersected and manifested themselves in the classroom and in peer groups.

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